

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

TO USINFO WASHDC

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AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

UNCLAS CAPE TOWN 0131

USIAC

FOR IAA,IPS,IBS/VOAC

SUBJ: CONTROVERSIAL SOUTH AFRICAN THEATER OPENED TO
ALL RACES

1. CAPE TOWN- CAPE TOWN'S NICO MALAN THEATER COMPLEX, FOR
FOUR YEARS THE FOCUS OF A SOUTH AFRICAN APARTHEID
CONTROVERSY, IS TO OPENED TO BLACKS.

2. THIS LANDMARK DECISION WAS ANNOUNCED JANUARY 29 BY
MR.A.H.VOSLOO,ADMINISTRATOR OF THE CAPE AND THE
PRETORIA GOVERNMENT'S SENIOR OFFICIAL FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S
LARGEST PROVINCE.

3. IN HIS STATEMENT,MR.VOSLOO SAID: 'I HAVE, AFTER
CONSULTATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT,DECIDED THAT IN RESPECT
OF THE NICO MALAN THEATER COMPLEX, ARRANGEMENTS WILL BE
MADE TO ALSO ACCOMODATE OTHER POPULATION GROUPS.....'

4. DETAILS OF THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
DECISION,WHICH SHOULD LOWER ANOTHER RACIAL BARRIER IN
THE COUNTRY, REMAIN TO BE DECIDED. ACCORDING TO MR.

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VOSLOO, THIS WILL BE DONE AFTER GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

WITH CAPAB, THE CAPE PERFORMING ARTS BOARD, WHICH RUNS THE COMPLEX.

5. THE MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR FACILITY, WHICH INCLUDES AN OPERA HOUSE, TWO THEATERS AND A RESTAURANT, WAS BUILT WITH REVENUES FROM BLACK AND WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN TAXPAYERS. SINCE ITS COMPLETION IN 1971 AT A COST OF OVER 16 MILLION DOLLARS. HOWEVER, ONLY WHITES HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO PATRONIZE ITS CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS BASED ON A GOVERNMENT DECISION.

6. CONTROVERSY OVER THIS RACIALLY-RESTRICTED AUDIENCE POLICY HAS EXISTED SINCE THEN. PROMINENT CAPE TOWN INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS WHICH OPPOSE THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY OF APARTHEID HAVE PUBLICLY CRITICED THIS DECISION. MANY OF THEM HAVE BOYCOTTED THE MANY OUTSTANDING CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS WHICH APPEAR REGULARLY AT THE NICO MALAN.

7. THE POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT OF CAPE TOWN'S MORNING ENGLISH-SPEAKING DAILY, THE CAPE TIMES, SAID 'THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO OPEN THE THEATER COMPLEX TO ALL RACES IS THE FIRST REALLY CONCRETE STEP TAKEN TO BACK ITS PLEDGE TO ELIMINATE IRRITATING RACE DISCRIMINATION MEASURES. IT REPRESENTS A MAJOR CHANGE IN THE GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE OVER THE YEARS TO RACE MIXING.' HE ADDED: 'IT HERALDS WHAT COULD BE THE FIRST CLEAR SIGN THAT A MORE ENLIGHTENED RACIAL ATTITUDE WITHIN THE GOVERNING NATIONALIST PARTY IS BEGINNING TO GAIN THE UPPER HAND.'

8. THE CAPE TIMES EDITORIAL ON THE SUBJECT STATED THAT 'IF THE NICO MALAN FACILITIES ARE NOW THROWN OPEN, WITH NO STRINGS ATTACHED, THIS WILL BE AN EXCELLENT BEGINNING, BUT ONLY A BEGINNING. ON THE ROAD TO A HAPPIER SOCIETY. AFTER ALL, A NICO MALAN OPEN TO EVERYONE IS ONLY A PARTIAL RESTORATION OF THE DISPENSATION THAT REIGNED IN CAPE TOWN IN THE DAYS WHEN CULTURAL EVENTS IN THE CITY HALL WERE ATTENDED BY ALL CITIZENS... IF WE HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE ADMINISTRATOR'S ANNOUNCEMENT CORRECTLY THE NATIONALIST GOVERNMENT HAS EMBARKED ON A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE OF DIRECTION.'

PETERSON

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